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ABSTRACT

Educators must attend to complex and subtle possibilities for hidden learning and attempt to control them so as to mitigate harmful learning and promote educational benefit. Educators have always known that people learn from both the unnoticed and the noticed, and have attempted to shape unconscious experience. As education has become more of a science, however, the schools have tended to emphasize explicit and measurable objectives, thus reducing education to schooling. As only a portion of a learner's total experience can be gained in school and from explicit teaching, the restriction of education to the limited contribution of the school results in unrealistic burdens of responsibility being placed on the schools and their professionals. Jean Anyon's 1980 study of the "hidden curriculum" highlights the shift which must be made in the interest of educational control. It seems plain that any serious attempt to manipulate important conditions of experience would involve acting on the economic, political, and cultural factors of the social system itself, which are remote from the influence of schools and school professionals. The solution to the problems will not be the development of another dualism between schooling and non-schooling education to parallel that between hidden and unhidden curricula, but rather to develop educational theory with concepts which are independent of schooling discourse. This will enable schooling to be recognized as no more than one important and special case. (Eleven notes are included.) (PRA)

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THE RADICAL EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF A CONCERN FOR THE "HIDDEN THINGS"

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Michael Apple challenged the determinism of the "correspondence principle" by describing forms of worker resistence to the demands of management.[1] David Gordon introduced one of his proposals for the concept of the hidden curriculum with a discussion of Geertz's analysis of a Balinese cock fight.[2] Both examined social contexts outside the school in order to enhance our understanding of the hidden curriculum. In both cases, the contexts outside school represented potent occasions for learning. A naive new employee would surely be quick to acquire the norms of worker resistance, and it may be that little of this knowledge would need to result from overt teaching, let alone from any learning which is planned or intended by management. The very point of the analysis of the cock-fight is to show that it is rich in social meaning and value which go far beyond the obvious externals. To be initiated into the activity is to learn about good and evil, animal and human, virtue, competition and appropriate behaviour.

When confronted with such cases it is hard to avoid being struck by the degree to which they resemble cases of the "hidden curriculum" themselves. If the hidden curriculum does not differ materially from cases such as these, then we might be led to wonder if some of our worries about it result from our failure to see education whole. The implications of this failure will be even more radical if we come to the conclusion that these various forms of indirect learning are ubiquitous, form the bulk of potentially educational experience, and that

both the intelligibility and the success of deliberate and overt teaching depend upon them.

Our interest in the "hidden curriculum" reveals our inclination to reduce education to schooling and formal teaching. This interest also highlights problems and contradictions which result from the reduction and which stand in the way of a better educational understanding. It is not just that we do not "pay enough attention" to the diversity of educational phenomena, or give them their due. We fail to conceptualise the domain of education fully or appropriately. This tailoring of educational concepts and discourse to the needs of formal schooling and self-conscious and overt teaching distorts our ability to understand the phenomena we know best, and impairs our grasp of educational potential. The very fact that the "hidden curriculum" contains the word "curriculum" illustrates the conceptual reduction. It is hard to see relevant differences between the phenomena of this "curriculum" and similar phenomena which exist where talk of a curriculum is out of place, such as the Balinese cockfight or the factory floor.

Except that the word "curriculum" signals that we are to think of schools, the judgements which we otherwise use to identify a hidden curriculum do not restrict our interest to schools at all. We pick out the hidden curriculum in the light of concepts which define our educational interest, but which transcend any particular institution -- such as the school, or any particular process -- such as teaching. Our educational interest is a moral concern for learning and it is the

application of moral concepts which draws us to learning which is hidden. We are concerned for harmful or beneficial learning which is in our power to control, and for which we ought to assume responsibility. Learning which we cannot control, or for which we ought not to be held responsible, is beyond our educational interest, as is learning which is unlikely to be either harmful or beneficial. Educators must attend to complex and subtle possibilities for hidden learning because of their responsibility to mitigate harmful learning and promote educational benefit. This educational interest will pick out hidden harm and benefit outside schools as readily as it will within.

It is not difficult to see how these requirements of education have been at work in the attention which has been paid to the hidden curriculum, and in leading us to focus on particular sorts of learning. Jane Roland Martin's early definition is puzzling in its reference to intention when she characterises the hidden curriculum as consisting "of those learning states of a setting which are either unintended or intended but not openly acknowledged to the learners in the setting unless the learners are aware of them." [3] Intention figures in the definition while clearly being unnecessary. Since the learning states can either be intended or unintended, intention cancels itself out. The puzzle dissolves, however, when we can see that the concerns about what might be hidden from the educator and what might be hidden from the learner can be brought under a common moral umbrella. We have a moral responsibility for our intentions, but intentions do not exhaust our responsibility. We hold people responsible for

some things, even if they are unintentional. Some sources of experience which may do harm to the learner could go unnoticed by the educator, but the educator nevertheless has a responsibility to make an effort to foresee and remove or mitigate such damage where it is reasonably possible to do so.

Similarly our moral responsibility to the learner suggests that we should not leave the content and consequences of learning concealed from them if they can be brought to an understanding of the implications and possibilities inherent in their learning. If our interests are educational, we will be seeking to enable them to transcend our educational decision-making and assume the direction of the course of their mental development for themselves. Through allowing educational content to remain concealed when learners could be made aware of it, we deprive them of a sphere of their voluntary participation, and delay the transfer of educational responsibility. Educators must attend to complex and subtle possibilities for hidden learning and attempt to control them because of their responsibility to mitigate harmful learning and promote educational benefit.

We are entitled to wonder, however, why the notion of the hidden curriculum had to be invented, and why it occasioned such a surge of interest. It is surely implausible that the possibilities and the potency of hidden learning have had to wait through several thousand years in order to be recognised in the second half of this century. Though the term was coined just over twenty years ago, the concept is hardly new or novel. Plato seems to have been very concerned indeed for

learning which was not manifest. He attacked poetic traditions in education because of the potential harm he saw in the views implicit in their works.[4] His educational design for the *Republic* went far beyond things directly taught, and considered a whole fabric of institutional arrangements which would shape the sentiments and beliefs of people who grew up within them.

It would also be odd to suggest that we had not long been aware of the educational pinciples upon which hidden learning depends. The central importance of the experience of the learner is one such principle. The merit of any plans or undertakings of schools or teachers must be assessed in terms of their impact within learner experience. When we focus on experience, we must be aware that it has a history, that it does not stop at the school gates, and that experiences interact.[5] The gap between the plans of educators, and what becomes of these planned efforts in the experience of learners is an elementary educational perception. Because of their concern for experience, educators have also long been aware that people learn from the unnoticed as well as from the noticed. As our attention acquires a focus, the other possibilities disappear for us while still contributing to the course of events, and to what we undergo. Reading a Victorian poem in order to appreciate the genderism with which we are now concerned is not to read it with a view to imaginatively reconstructing Victorian aesthetic sensibilities. Both readings make some things prominent at the expense of others. The architecture and design of schools, like that of churches, have long provided evidence of attempts to shape unconscious experience in particular ways. If the architecture distracts

from the lesson, it is not fulfilling such purposes. The necessities of selective attention create conditions of hiddenness for teachers as well as for students. The more difficult the subject matter, and the more intensely it must occupy our attention, the more likely it is that we will become unconscious of larger amounts of our potential experiential field. This limits the value of the practice of alerting students to the hidden potential or what is to come, since it may divide attention which cannot afford the distraction.

It is also basic to an understanding of education that some of what the student is to learn will necessarily remain hidden from them through much of their learning. Part of what it means to speak of educational subject matter is that it is still to be acquired by the learner. In some important respects, they do not understand it, or cannot perform the activities with which it is concerned. In various ways and to varying degrees the learner will be unable to see the consequences of mastering the material or the activities, until certain cognitive, attitudinal, emotional or motor developments have occurred. In some instances this lack of understanding is quite profound, and the change which is to come about will involve startling transformations. Depending upon the case (and frequently relative to the significance of the learning) there are considerable limitations on the extent to which these matters can be made transparent until a good deal of the educational course has already been run, and the students have already been changed.

Harmful things can be concealed by any of these

processes, just as they can often be manipulated with educational purposes in mind. If we have known about this for a very long time, then the emergence of our new interest in hidden learning suggests that something has, nevertheless, been neglected or overlooked. A hint of this can be gained by noting the dualism which has arisen here between the hidden and the manifest.[6] Dualisms appear to arise when there has been a distorted or uneven emphasis. The second element of the dualism is devised to correct the distortion, but takes its shape from the element it is devised to correct. The dualism between the unhidden and the hidden remains a schooling one, and the hidden things become a curriculum because the critique is caught up in the distortion and bound to schooling. Schools are set up in order to get explicit and specific sorts of things learned. Explicit and manifest learning is the whole point of having them. But the concepts of education and learner experience are not bounded by this. Schools, exactly like any other institutions -- like the streets, the supermarkets or places of paid and unpaid employment -- will provide a matrix of conditions for hidden learning. Like any other institution, the school must be manipulated to enhance educational experiences which may be gained by those who participate in them. Yet when we set out to redress the emphasis -- excessive, even for schools -- on the overt and manifest, we identified the alternative dimension in terms of the curriculum, as if the concepts which make the school unique can account for the rest of educational experience. We failed to identify the missing dimension as a member of that class of educational conditions which the school shares with every other institution.

The undue educational emphasis on the manifest and explicit might be explained as a consequence of an enthusiasm for developing education as a profession with a particular kind of science and technology over much of this century.[7] This has been a science which has sought predictability, replicability and measurability. Such an approach, and the form of educational control which it appears to offer, inevitably places an emphasis on explicit, detailed and measurable objectives, and on the visible. The school has offered a setting not unlike a laboratory in which variables might be managed. The reduction of education to schooling is encouraged in this way, along with the reduction of school experience to the measurable and readily manipulable. Vallence argued that qualitative rather than quantitative research might be more fruitful to our understanding of the hidden curriculum.[8] She also suggested that both the hidden curriculum, and qualitative research, imply different ways of viewing and understanding issues of control.[9] The limitations of quantitative research in dealing with certain kinds of subject matter suggests the danger that, if such research comes to be preferred, subject unsuitable to that sort of inquiry may become marginalised.

Following the development of the notion of the "hidden curriculum" some of our educational disappointments and frustrations may seem more intelligible. The control which the educational science had promised did not eventuate, and attention to the hidden curriculum helps us to understand why this might be so. Viewed from the standpoint of learner

experience, our schooling settings are inevitably ambiguous, and our discourse and action layered with meaning. Moments of school experience are continuous with past experience, which is also continuous with experience outside. From this point of view our control of experiential events is much more rough and indirect than we may have been inclined to think.

By drawing attention to things which were being overlooked, the development of the notion of the "hidden curriculum" has expanded the potential control available to teachers. They can engage in closer examination of the possibilities implicit in their rules, demeanour, unconscious preferences and the other meanings concealed in words and texts. This expansion may, however, be matched by an increased sense of impotence, as school professionals become more aware of the many additional sources of experience which lie outside their reasonable foresight or significant control, but which shape their efforts. Many of the forces which are most powerful in forming the school and its hidden contents, as well as the conditions of hidden learning elsewhere, lie in political, economic and cultural decisions remote from the influence of schooling educators.

In a 1980 study of the hidden curriculum, Jean Anyon explored the contribution schools might make to the reproduction of the system of class relations in society.[10] She compared five schools which drew on different backgrounds of social class. The work performed by the pupils in these schools differed materially from school to school while closely agreeing with the work requirements within the social classes

they represented. There were marked differences in the kinds of understanding expected of pupils, the initiative they were expected to take, the independence of thought and action they were allowed, and the nature of the pupil/teacher interaction which the teachers permitted or encouraged. Clearly Anyon described different hidden curricula, and implicit in such an account is the possibility that the conditions could be controlled. Such analysis highlights the shift which must be made in our interest in educational control because it seems plain that any serious attempt to manipulate important conditions of experience would involve action at numerous sites which are quite remote from the influence of schools and schooling professionals. Though the school rules and practices can be changed, it is too much to expect that the eductional problems themselves could be substantially removed by action at this level alone. The school may reproduce class differences, but presumably the schools are only a part of that story. Class differences also come to school with the learners, and leave with them at the end of the day. The school itself operates within a community which consists of groups possessing various kinds of class expectations. Though schools and teachers may valiantly attempt to change the conditions at hand, we should not overestimate the control which they can expect to exercise over the sources of experience and hidden learning which helped to create the hidden curriculum in the first place. Anyon's analysis of the hidden curricula within these schools must lead any serious attempt to control the conditions of learning far beyond schooling into the heart of the social system itself.

If we are concerned firstly with the experience of the learner, and only with schooling and teaching insofar as they may contribute to that experience, we may be less inclined to place schooling and teaching at the centre of our educational interest. Only a portion of the learner's total experiences can be gained in school, and only a portion even of this are experiences of explicit teaching. Often the most important experiences we have are not gained in either of these two ways. It is hard to see how we can expect to understand schooling and teaching properly, or judge their potential, unless we can locate them accurately within the entire field of educational possibilities which could influence the learner. A fundamental tension exists between our primary concern with the experience of the learner on the one hand, and our restriction of the field of educational action to the limited and dependent contribution of the school on the other. Such a restriction will inevitably result in quite unrealistic burdens of responsibility being placed upon schools and their professionals.

The task of recovering a proper educational proportion may involve more than a mere redirection of our attention. The reduction of education to schooling and teaching is ideological, and not merely logical, in the sense that there is a continual tendency to make the reduction even while acknowledging that education is larger than schooling, and even while studies of non-schooling education are pursued. These pieces of counter evidence may even serve the ideological function of reassuring us that the reduction is not a particularly serious problem. Meanwhile the concepts and

discourse of schooling dominate educational thought in general, making it difficult for educational activity which does not resemble schooling activity to be understood on its own terms, or to achieve an educational prominence. The concept of the curriculum is a school-based concept which dominates thought about educational content. The concepts of educational authority and responsibility are mostly tailored to the requirements of professionals associated with school systems. Our perceptions of educational control centre around those forms of control which can most plausibly be applied to school settings. The issues which arise in connection with the hidden curriculum illustrate all of these things. The solution to the problems which they pose will not be the development of another dualism between schooling and non-schooling education to parallel that between hidden and unhidden curricula, but rather to develop educational theory with concepts which are, in the first instance, independent of schooling discourse, thus enabling schooling to be recognised as no more than one important and special case.[11]

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4. Plato *Republic* 377b-397a.

5. Dewey, J. *Experience and Education*, New York: Collier Macmillan, 1938 pp. 33-50.

6. Dualisms of this sort were a particular concern to Dewey. See Kennedy, G. Dewey's Logic and Theory of Knowledge. In J.A. Boydston (Ed.) *Guide to the Works of John Dewey*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970, p.72.

7. Bailyn, B. *Education in the Forming of American Society* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960, pp.8-9.

8. Vallence, E. The hidden curriculum and qualitative inquiry as states of mind. *Journal of Education*, 1980, 162, 1, pp. 138-151.

9. Vallence, The hidden curriculum and qualitative inquiry as states of mind. pp. 149, 150.

10. Anyon, J. Social Class and the hidden curriculum of work. *Journal of Education*, 1980, 162, 1, pp. 67-92.

11. I am grateful to William Schubert for drawing my attention to the body of literature which deals with education beyond school, and am in agreement with his view that such learning "dwarfs" schooling in the educational life of the child. I disagree, however, that the content of such studies is properly the domain of the curriculum theorist. Schubert, W. *Curriculum Books: the First Eighty Years* Lanham, Md.: University

Press of America, 1980, p.347. See also Schubert, W. and Melnick, C.R. Study of the "outside curriculum" of students' lives. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 1987, 2, 2, pp. 200-202.